



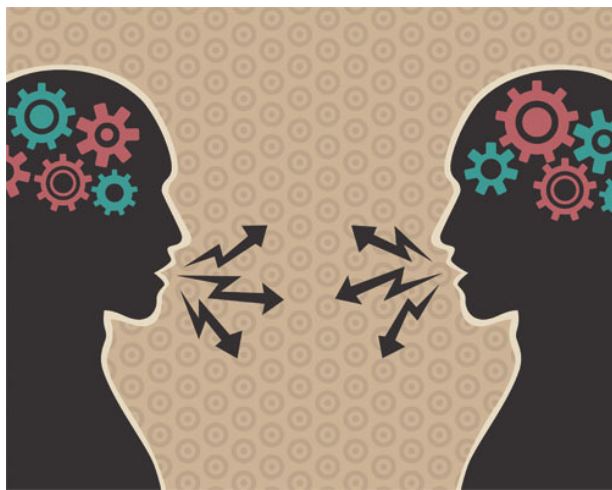
***Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
April 15-19, 2013***

The evolution of Aboriginal partnerships: Consultation, case law, cultural factors have changed the way companies and communities do business

[The Lawyers Weekly](#)

April 19, 2013

Richard Skinulis



For a resource-based economy like Canada's, successful partnerships between mining companies and aboriginal groups—mainly First Nations and Métis—are vital.

Natural Resources Canada lists 198 of these agreements, ranging from letters of intent to exploration, impact/benefit and participation agreements. How to make it all work in a legally, culturally and historically complex environment was the topic of a recent panel

discussion called Aboriginal Partnership: Models for Success. The panel was part of the JD/MBA Students' Conference to Explore the Intersection of Law, Business and Mining, held at York University.

"I think the takeaway [from the panel discussion] is that...there is an awareness that being respectful and being partners is a more appropriate way to work with these communities," says Ormonde Benson, a partner with Miller Thomson who participated in the panel. "Between the consultation requirements that are statutory and driven by case law and the negotiation requirements and the cultural factors and the fact that you are typically dealing with multiple aboriginal groups, you need to understand that this is a different process from the standard type of operation a corporate lawyer would do."

It has not always been seen that way. According to Sandra Gogal, also a Miller Thomson partner and co-chair of the firm's aboriginal specialty law group, the way business was done in the past has eroded trust between developers and aboriginal communities. But, she says, it's a different world today.

"I've been practising in this area for over 15 years and I've seen the change," she says.

"The way things are being done now are so much more progressive and respectful and protective of aboriginal treaty rights. Aboriginal communities [want to] have consent over the project—[a veto]—so they can slow things down and understand how the project is going to have an impact."

The legal history of the relationship between aboriginal groups and government and resource companies is long. The latest Supreme Court of Canada decision is typical. In *Manitoba Métis Federation Inc. v. Canada* (Attorney General) [2013] S.C.J. No. 14, the court found that the government failed to live up to the promises it made to the Métis in the late 1800s involving 1.4 million acres of land grants.

Other pivotal Supreme Court cases include *Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Minister of Forests)* [2004] S.C.J. No. 70, *Taku River Tlingit First Nation v. British Columbia (Project Assessment Director)* [2004] S.C.J. No. 69, and *Mikisew Cree First Nation v. Canada (Minister of Canadian Heritage)* [2005] S.C.J. No. 71, which found that the Crown has a duty to consult and, where appropriate, accommodate in situations that might adversely impact potential or established aboriginal or treaty rights.

This duty to consult is being enforced in other jurisdictions as well, such as the changes to the *Ontario Mining Act* that will become compliant in April.

"We are going to introduce exploration permitting and consultation into the mix," explains Bernie Hughes, director, Aboriginal Relations, Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and a panel participant. "If you want to go on the land and use heavy equipment, you will have to have a permit and demonstrate consultation."

Everyone agrees that sharing information with aboriginal groups early in the process is the key to good partnerships.

"Building the relationship is a critical part of the partnership, and this doesn't happen with aboriginal communities overnight," Hughes says. "The proponent has to take into account the community's notions of the importance of the land...that the land is the provider."

If a project gets past the financially risky exploration phase, offering the community benefits that go beyond the life of the mine and contribute to self-sufficiency is also seen as important.

"I've seen a lot of joint ventures created," says Michael Fox, president of Fox High Impact Consulting and a panel participant, "and they [aboriginal groups] say: 'why confine ourselves to just this mine that will only be here for 15 or so years? Let's go sell our services elsewhere to other treaty areas in other provinces.' That's the future."

To encourage this process, mining companies, which need everything from trucking and catering to drilling, are starting to do more than just hand out contracts.

"When we negotiate an agreement...we focus a lot on understanding the community needs, what their interests are and what their existing capacity is to actually do the work," Gogal says. "You not only want to hire, you also want to develop real businesses."

Benson offers the recent example of a company that made a virtue out of this necessity.

"We had a resource company that actually financed an aboriginal-owned sub-contractor to not only acquire the assets required but also ensured that that company was hiring from within the community," he says. "The loans [are] repaid by the work they do."

"I think the communities are looking for something more than just handouts like fixed payments, which is the way things used to be done. Now time has evolved, case law has evolved and everyone is in tune with more of a 'partnership' model approach," Gogal says, adding: "You don't have to read too far in the news to know that if you don't have community support, it's very difficult to get permits and develop projects."

Stories in a New Skin 'unzips' face of Inuit literature

[Calgary Herald](#)

April 12, 2013

Michael Hingston



*Keavy Martin is a professor at the University of Alberta and the author of **Stories in a New Skin**, a book of literary criticism and history about Inuit literature*
Photograph by:
Shaughn Butts

The cover of
Keavy Martin's
Stories in a New

Skin depicts an Inuit man unzipping his face to reveal his true identity hidden underneath: A fox. It's a lovely, striking image — drawn by Ningeokuluk Teevee in 2007, the same year it also appeared on the cover of an issue of *The Walrus* — and it reinforces a key part of the argument being made between the book's covers.

"It really signals this idea of adaptation," Martin, a professor of indigenous literature at the University of Alberta, says of Teevee's illustration.

"A lot of Inuit scholars emphasize adaptability as a crucial component of Inuit culture: To make do with whatever you have."

You can see this principle at work in several areas of life in the North, from diet to shelter. But *Stories in a New Skin* takes a relatively new tack by applying it to the growing field of Inuit literature and literary criticism. Here, flexibility is essential because so many Inuit stories come in genres that don't neatly conform to the ones southerners have grown accustomed to.

How, for instance, should we engage with old hunting songs, the details of which shift according to who's doing the singing — and who's in the audience? Or what about *iviutiit*, which are a kind of insult-poem, designed to publicly embarrass others when they've done something wrong?

"As people working within universities we've had a hard time approaching something that's not in a familiar form," Martin says.

"That poses a tremendous problem. If we're trying to think about ways of decolonizing the curriculum, and the institution, there are a lot of barriers." One potential way around those barriers is to embrace the idea of skins and adaptability. In the book, Martin is careful to define troublesome terms like "nation" and "literature" only loosely. Instead of trying to jam Inuit texts into an artificial, ill-fitting box, she searches for common ground between northern and southern traditions, and highlights the ways in which Inuit stories have already infiltrated the southern mainstream. These include the acclaimed feature film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* and Michael Arvaarluk Kusugak's young-adult novel *The Curse of the Shaman*, published by HarperCollins in 2006.

This is a savvy move on Martin's part. Too often we associate this kind of flexibility with weakness, or selling out (whatever that means); when talking about indigenous groups, we also tend to rely on colonial language and imagery.

Those issues are still far from settled, as Martin is quick to point out. But *Stories in a New Skin* recasts this malleability in a refreshingly positive light, framing it instead as a measure of intelligence and cleverness.

Martin is not Inuit herself but discovered her calling when she learned that the University of Toronto, where she was working on a master's degree in comparative literature, offered a linguistics class in the Inuit language of Inuktitut.

"Once I did that, I was hooked," she says. "I can't overemphasize the importance of (the language): The richness, the complexity. It was a deeply humbling experience." Martin was also struck by a growing movement around the place of indigenous literature within academia. "There was an emphasis on really trying to understand indigenous literatures on their own terms, within the context of their own histories and theories," she says.

From there, it wasn't long until Martin attended the University of Manitoba's five-week "bush school" in Pangnirtung, a remote Inuit hamlet on Baffin Island. There she was immersed in local culture in a way that a Toronto classroom could never duplicate. Martin and her fellow students spent a week camping out on the land, practised their fledgling Inuktitut, and took part in question-and-answer sessions with local elders.

But what was perhaps most surprising, especially for an academic who'd spent much of her adult life holed up in libraries, was the fact that, to the Inuit, true knowledge can only come from first-hand life experience. It doesn't come from books.

"I realized how little I actually knew from my own experience," Martin says. "Elders would always begin by saying, 'I'm only going to tell you what I really know.' That really struck me, and got me thinking about what knowledge is."

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Report by task force on First Nations-Metis educational outcomes released

[Regina Leader-Post](#)

April 15, 2013 1:42 PM



FSIN vice-chief Simon Bird. Photograph by: Gord Waldner, The StarPhoenix

REGINA — The report of the joint task force that has been studying how to improve education and employment outcomes for First Nations and Metis people has been released.

The task force is a joint project of the provincial government and the

Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. The task force was set up because the government "recognizes First Nations and Metis people have not accrued the same or equitable benefit from the education system for various systemic reasons, both historical and social, and as a result, have not been able to benefit from the economic opportunities existing and created," according to a background document. The task force recommends that the province "proclaim First Nations and Metis languages as the original languages of Saskatchewan."

Other recommendations include:

- * Vast expansion of early childhood intervention programs for aboriginal children both on- and off-reserve, to be funded by the federal and provincial governments.
- * A study to determine whether funding gaps exist between provincial schools and those located on reserve. If disparities are found, the province and First Nations authorities should jointly "engage" the federal government and seek mediation if necessary.
- * The province funding what were traditionally federal responsibilities, such as on-reserve school driver training or subsidies for reserve students wanting to attend provincial schools.
- * Eliminating the one-year mandatory wait time for high school dropouts to access adult education programs.
- * Better alignment between Saskatchewan employers and post-secondary institutions, particularly for First Nations and Metis students.
- * Streamlining the process which matches aboriginal post-secondary graduates with employers.

The report was released Monday at the Legislature Building. The task force members include Gary Merasty, vice-president of corporate social responsibility of mining giant Cameco; Rita Bouvier, researcher/writer and community-learning facilitator, and Don Hoium, former director of the Regina Board of Education.

"Together, they share a vision of a prosperous province where all people have access to a high quality of life. While there has been some improvement in education and employment outcomes, the improvement is not proceeding at a satisfactory pace. From this shared vision, the Joint Task Force was created." Since being set up in March 2012, the task force travelled to 16 communities and held 83 individual and public consultations with over 1,000 people. The report claims to have identified themes that emerged, in four target areas — early childhood; pre-kindergarten to grade 12; post-secondary; and labour-force attachment.

"On behalf of the seventy-four First Nations and the executive of the FSIN, I thank the Government of Saskatchewan for making Early Childhood through Post-Secondary education, and employment issues a priority," said FSIN vice-chief Simon Bird in a statement.

"This report is a great start in investing in our future, as our First Nations continue to be the largest untapped resource in this territory we call Saskatchewan. If this new way of working in collaboration is any indication of what we can do together, then it's only natural that we as First Nations have a very strong role to play in the future."

Education Minister Russ Marchuk thanked the task force for its work and said he was "pleased to see that several of the recommendations align closely with the work government has committed to already in our Plan for Growth, and we look forward to reviewing the final report more fully in the months ahead."

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Getting a driver's licence could help: report released on aboriginal education

[Times Colonist](#)

April 15, 2013

REGINA - Something as basic as getting a driver's licence could help natives find jobs in Saskatchewan, according to a joint government-aboriginal report.

The report by the three-member task force makes 25 recommendations to improve education and employment outcomes for First Nations and Metis people. One recommendation is that the province should fund driver education training for Saskatchewan students attending schools on reserves.

"Well, if you don't have a licence, you can't work," said task force chairman Gary Merasty.

"It's absolutely critical. I can't think of any job virtually in Saskatchewan that does not require a licence either to get you to work or as part of your duties."

Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations vice-chief Simon Bird says driver education is a practical solution.

"It's going to be a win-win not only for the students themselves, but for the economy," said Bird.

"We keep talking about long-term investment and something as simple, as many people would like to think so, is not so simple when it comes to...who is going to put the investment on paper and right into our First Nations schools."

The report also offers suggestions for an early childhood strategy, literacy, education funding and skills training.

The task force says it heard from people about the limited availability of reading material — books, newspapers, magazines and Internet. It says the lack of literacy skills impacts daily life, health and education outcomes and employment opportunities.

The group says it also heard numerous statements about the disparities in educational funding between reserve schools and provincial schools and that difficulties have been compounded by years of underfunding. One recommendation is that the province, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and First Nations education authorities examine the level of pre-kindergarten to grade 12 funding provided for Saskatchewan.

Another is that the province expand adult basic education, particularly on reserves.

The federal government did not take part in the task force, but the report nonetheless makes recommendations for Ottawa, too. It says the feds should increase funding for the post-secondary student support program in order to keep pace with the rising costs of living and the increasing number of First Nations and Metis students.

The task force also recommends that all post-secondary institutions work with employers to better align job needs and program offerings.

"We set up the report so that there's short, medium and long-term goals that can be achieved and certainly I think some of the short-term goals are very realistic," said Merasty.

Bird says the information has to be acted upon. He says the province and First Nations people can't afford to go through another generation without change.

"The status quo is not acceptable," said Bird.

"We can't go on and expect better results for the territory we call Saskatchewan, which we all share, without having to invest seriously in our First Nations students."

Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall hinted that some action on the recommendations could come soon.

Wall told the legislature Monday that driver education "is obviously pretty key for young First Nations people, First Nations of all ages to be engaged in the economy."

"It's one small recommendation. We might be able to move on that very quickly," Wall said.

Province announces on-reserve high schools will soon get driver's ed: SGI to fund the program; in the neighbourhood of \$1.7 million

[NewsTalk 980 CJME](#)

April 16, 2013

Adriana Christianson

More First Nation and Metis students will have the opportunity to take driver's education.

The Government of Saskatchewan announced Tuesday it's increasing the funding for all eligible students who attend on-reserve high schools.

"We often assume students can just do it on their own; but in fact sometimes we need to assist that," said Education Minister Russ Marchuk.

Although driver training is already offered by some First Nation high schools, this money will allow about 2,600 more students to take the program, and it'll cost between \$510 and \$600 per student to take the course.

"We're estimating that in the neighbourhood of \$1.7 million," Marchuk said.

That money is coming from SGI, but Marchuk added he hopes some of the future costs can come from First Nations Bands and the federal government.

As it stands, every provincial high school has a driver's education program, costing the province roughly \$6.5 million. When it comes to First Nation schools, only three out of 78 reserves have the program.

The Minister responsible for SGI said having a license to drive is a critical step in getting a job. If a program isn't offered, it puts an individual at a disadvantage.

"They're not able to get that training and then therefore can't their licenses soon. Then they get out of school and they can't immediately engage in a job because they can't get to the job," said Donna Harpauer.

"Our students need to have the same toolbox that we expect from anybody going into the workforce," said Simon Bird, Vice-Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

The announcement comes one day after a joint government-aboriginal task force came out with a report on how to improve First Nation and Metis education and employment, making 25 recommendations. Expanding driver's ed was one of those recommendations.

SGI will be discussing with high schools over the next few months to help them implement the program. It's expected to be in place for the start of the next school year in September.

NDP candidate resigns over online comments about First Nations compensation



[Vancouver Sun](#)

April 16, 2013

New Democratic leader Adrian Dix accepted the resignation of Kelowna-Mission candidate Dayleen Van Ryswyk on Tuesday, saying she made unacceptable comments in Internet postings involving the compensation for First Nations. Photograph by: ', '

VANCOUVER — The B.C. election got off to an ugly start Tuesday when an NDP candidate was forced to quit over

inflammatory statements about aboriginals.

New Democratic leader Adrian Dix accepted the resignation of Kelowna-Mission candidate Dayleen Van Ryswyk, saying she made unacceptable comments in Internet postings involving the compensation for First Nations.

On the 2009 forum, a user named Dayleen wrote in a thread entitled "Strip Them of the Status Card."

"It's not the status cards, it's the fact that we have been paying out of the nose for generations for something that isn't our doing. If their ancestors sold out too cheaply, it's not my fault and I shouldn't have to be paying for any mistake or whatever you want to call it from MY hard earned money."

Another one of the posts compares the benefits afforded to aboriginal people with claims other abused groups could be making.

"I don't think anyone is saying that wrongs didn't happen (incredible wrongs). You could have almost any race, group or ethnic people tell you horrible haunting stories of what happened to them. If someone did me wrong, it's my right to sue ... as it is everyone else's.

"Again, how many Jewish, Polish, Russian, Dutch, etc. walked into a gas chamber, were gunned down, raped, tortured and starved to death. . . tell me how many Germans do you know that are handing over a (portion) of their paycheck EVERY month for what happened NOT very long ago. . . "

After accepting Van Ryswyk's resignation, Dix said a new NDP candidate for Kelowna-Mission will be announced soon.

The riding is held by Forests Minister Steve Thomson, who won handily in 2009.

The resignation happened soon after Premier Christy Clark went to visit the lieutenant governor to ask for the current government to end and the election campaign to begin.

Clark launched her campaign with a rally in Victoria, calling the vote the "most important election in modern history."

She said voters have a choice between controlling spending and lowering debt or higher taxes and bigger debt and government.

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Sentencing circle offender winds up back in jail: 'He made a commitment and has to pay the consequences'

[Kamloops Daily News](#)

April 17, 2013

Cam Fortems

An aboriginal offender who was the subject of Kamloops' first sentencing circle is back in jail after he breached court conditions.

Douglas Jensen pleaded guilty Tuesday to breaching court orders in February and March this year. He was placed in custody after the second breach. Crown lawyer Neil Flanagan said Jensen's sentence includes 21 new days in prison as well as three months probation.

In February, a civilian RCMP member saw Jensen out past his curfew. Last month, RCMP arrested him for breaching a no-alcohol term of his probation. Jensen, 35, was convicted of numerous offences last year, including mischief, dangerous driving and assaulting a peace officer while resisting arrest. He was arrested Feb. 14, 2011, after he drove a pickup into the house of a Tk'emlups Indian Band member.

Jensen was drunk at the time, and crashed into the house after the owner pushed him away from the front door.

B.C. Supreme Court justice Ian Meiklem sentenced Jensen in September last year to the 19 months he already served in jail along with a 22-month period of probation. Jensen pleaded guilty Tuesday to breaching terms of that probation order, done at the sentencing circle at the TIB reserve in September last year.

The sentencing circle, the first of its kind in Kamloops, featured a smudge ceremony and ceremonial eagle feather. The judge and lawyers were dressed casually at last year's event. TIB chief Shane Gottfriedson addressed Jensen directly.

On Tuesday, Gottfriedson called Jensen's troubles "disappointing.

"Dougie made a commitment, not only to the community but to the ceremony. . . . He made a commitment and has to pay the consequences."

Two years ago, just 12 hours after his release from a federal penitentiary, Jensen got drunk, mistook an address, and terrified a stranger when she answered her door. He pleaded guilty to mischief.

Around the same time, Jensen was banished from Tk'emlups band lands amid allegations that he was a member of a criminal gang called Redd Alert. He denied those allegations. The man has 54 convictions, including several assaults.

Sentencing circles are based on the concept of rehabilitation. Despite Jensen's failure, Gottfriedson said the TIB remains committed to the idea.

"I wouldn't let one person cast a poor light on this."

Province proposes new rules for Alberta's Métis Settlements

[Edmonton Journal](#)

April 16, 2013



Sarah O'Donnell

Aboriginal Relations Minister Robin Campbell. Photograph by: Ed Kaiser, Edmonton Journal

EDMONTON - Alberta's eight Métis settlements will face tougher financial reporting rules, salary caps for councillors and a new code of conduct

under proposed changes to the laws that govern them.

Aboriginal Relations Minister Robin Campbell introduced the new accountability standards Monday in the legislature as part of a bundle of amendments to the Métis Settlements Act.

"Our goal is to have the Métis settlements run as full municipalities, understanding the uniqueness of the culture that they have," Campbell said.

Bill 19 comes one month after the Redford government and the Métis Settlements General Council, a political and administrative body that represents the collective interests of Alberta's settlements, signed a long-term agreement that will direct \$85 million in provincial funding to the settlements over the next 10 years.

There was unanimous consent from Métis leaders representing settlement councils to adopt the long-term governance and funding deal, Campbell said, and the changes in Bill 19 reflect that agreement. "I'm confident the membership of the settlements will look at this as being a positive step forward," he said.

Alberta's eight Métis settlements — Buffalo Lake, East Prairie, Elizabeth, Fishing Lake, Gift Lake, Kikino, Paddle Prairie and Peavine — cover about 512,000 hectares in northern Alberta and are home to about 8,100 people. Each settlement elects a five-person council to set local policy and services to the community.

Floyd Thompson, chairman of the Kikino Métis Settlement Council south of Lac La Biche, said the amendments are a move in the right direction for Alberta's Métis governments. "Everything should be up front and centre when you address anything in our communities," he said.

If passed, the amended Métis Settlement Act will require each settlement council to submit annual, standardized financial reports to the minister and the General Council by Sept. 30. As of January 2014, each settlement also will have to create a three-year business plan.

The Métis Settlement General Council will establish an official code of conduct for all councils and set up an independent committee that reviews councillors' salaries and make public recommendations.

Using that information, the General Council will approve maximum salary rates for elected councillors. Right now, councillor pay is determined by each settlement, Campbell said.

"I would suggest that the council pay will align more closely with comparable municipalities at the end of the day."

Thompson, who served as one of the Métis representatives during the negotiation of the long-term agreement, said it is important the legislation puts many of the oversight responsibilities in the hands of the Métis Settlement General Council.

"That's the way that it should be," Thompson said. "It's not our province that are putting those rules in. We are saying, 'Yes we agree through our discussions and negotiations with them that these kinds of rules should be put in place and the onus should be on us.'"

Though Thompson said he supports the changes in Bill 19, he disputed Campbell's comments linking Métis Settlements and municipalities since the two types of government hold land differently, with Métis communities owning surface and timber rights.

"We have some similarities to the province have and some similarities to municipalities," he said. "But the bottom line is we're Métis Settlements, we'll never become a municipality and don't care to be referred to as a municipality."

Bill 19 also extends the number of years between a settlement council's election from three years to four. The move reflects the new four-year term the province established for all municipal governments. Local elections for cities and settlements will take place in October.

Wildrose Leader Danielle Smith said Monday that a first look at the legislation seems promising.

"The accountability requirements in the bill do not appear to be onerous and I have been impressed with the progress many Métis settlement councils have made in the development of governance capacity," Smith said in an email.

"I don't expect that they will have significant issues with meeting the accountability standards in the bill."

Liberal MLA David Swann said he believed the legislation, and the agreement tied to it, appear to be part of a reasonable accountability package, he said.

"I can give credit where credit is due," Swann said. "This is progress."

But Swann, the Liberals' aboriginal relations critic, said he still was concerned about the move to eliminate the Métis ombudsman position.

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Squamish language festival set: Skwxú7mesh-speaking elders help inspire effort to ensure tongue's long-term survival

[The Squamish Chief](#)

April 18, 2013



David Burke

Photo by David Burke/The Chief

Alex Williams, whose aboriginal name is Xatsalánexw ta áynexw, is today one of only two people in the Squamish area who can speak the language fluently.

When Alex Williams was growing up, the Squamish language — Skwxú7mesh snichim — was the only tongue spoken by Williams, his family and fellow Squamish Nation members.

When government agents came around the Williams home in the Squamish Valley near Brackendale looking for children to cart off to residential school, Williams' father "chased me out, gave me a piece of bread and said, 'You go out in the field and stay there,'" the Squamish elder, 84, told The Chief at his home in North Yards on Friday (April 12).

The fact that he never attended the racist and now-discredited residential school system is one reason Williams, whose aboriginal name is Xatsalánexw ta áynexw, is today one of only two people in the Squamish area who can speak the language fluently. He and elder Addie Kermeen have served as both an inspiration and a valuable resource for the Squamish Nation Language Festival that's set to take place on Monday (April 22) from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Totem Hall.

The event, which takes place on a non-instructional day at local public schools, will include games, songs and activities in the Skwxú7mesh language reinforcing its

everyday use among young and old Squamish Nation members alike, said Shirley Lewis (Xayiltennat), Squamish Nation language and cultural worker.

The festival is part of a multi-faceted effort to ensure the language's long-term survival, not only by teaching it in the schools, but by encouraging parents to speak it at home, event co-organizer Rebecca Campbell said.

Squamish Nation cultural workers, for example, have begun to provide both parents and children with a list of common Squamish phrases that can be used around the home, as a way to reinforce the learning that takes place Sea to Sky School District schools, Campbell said. So far 15 families in the Squamish area are part of the program, she said.

Initiatives such as the Skwxú7mesh-English Dictionary, completed in 2011 by Dr. Peter Jacobs, are key to the long-term survival of the tongue spoken commonly by Alex Williams and others in their youth. But it's also important to reinforce the idea among young Squamish Nation people that it is a living language and a vital part of a culture of which they should be proud, Campbell said.

"The goal is to revive the language by trying to have it used every day at home — getting the parents on board, not just the children," she said.

At Monday's festival, young and old will take part in a Twister-style game that includes Skwxú7mesh words and phrases, as well as one that includes the terms for the various body parts as well as chair and hiding games all using words and actions in Skwxú7mesh.

"It builds vocabulary," Campbell said. "It's part of the immersion technique. They learn the language because it's fun."

Lewis said those organizing the festival are inspired by a desire to ensure that the language spoken by Williams and Kermeen thrives after the respected elders are gone.

"We try to utilize them as much as we can," she said.

Williams only began learning English at age 13, after he went to work in a logging camp in Parkhurst, near what's now Whistler, by listening to the radio and to the non-Aboriginal English-speaking people around him. He's now fluent in both languages.

"I've spoken [Skwxú7mesh] since I was a kid and I haven't forgotten it," he said. "I'll never forget."

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Gladue report writing examined as way to help convicted

[Alberta Sweetgrass](#)

Volume: 20 Issue: 3 Year: 2013

Shari Narine Sweetgrass

The Siksika Justice Department is considering if full Gladue report writing can better serve its members who go through the corrections system.

“(Aboriginal people) have the highest rates of incarceration in the jail system and it’s important that these reports be used to keep those people who don’t need to be in jail out of there,” said Siksika First Nations Councillor Laverna McMaster.

Siksika is one of the few First Nations across the country to have a court house on its land and is the only First Nation to have a full-time partnership with a legal aid society. It also has its own Justice Department which includes a team from Legal Aid Alberta, corrections and probation officers, a court worker, and a variety of programs, including fine options and a restorative justice tribunal. The First Nation also offers programs, through its health and wellness services, which include mental health, addictions and family violence counselling.

At the moment, pre-sentencing reports, “which take into consideration the principles outlined in Gladue” are used, says Legal Aid Alberta staff lawyer Christine Hutchinson, who works on the First Nation.

A 1999 Supreme Court of Canada decision in *R v. Gladue* provided an interpretation of Section 718.2 (e), an amendment of the Criminal Code made in 1996. The point stated that a “court that imposes a sentence shall also take into consideration... all available sanctions other than imprisonment that are reasonable in the circumstances should be considered for all offenders, with particular attention to the circumstances of Aboriginal offenders.”

As a result of this ruling, Gladue reports or Gladue-style reports were developed. The purpose of Gladue reports is to present the background of the convicted person as well as consider systemic issues so those circumstances can be taken into consideration for sentencing.

Last year, in *R. v. Ipeelee*, the Supreme Court stated that the reports had not been implemented widely and that the circumstances of Aboriginal people were not being used when sentencing was taking place.

“In *Ipeelee* the Supreme Court emphasized again that... legal counsel has a duty as well to make the court aware of these circumstances. So there’re additional duties on all the players in the court room to make sure that Aboriginal people are properly represented when they are in court,” said Hutchinson.

According to Correctional Service Canada 2006 statistics, 18.5 per cent of offenders serving federal sentences are Aboriginal.

Aboriginal people comprise 2.7 percent of the adult Canadian population. However, in the Prairies, where Aboriginal people are a larger proportion of the general population, they account for 60 percent of offenders. Aboriginal women are incarcerated at a greater rate than Aboriginal men, with Aboriginal women accounting for 30 percent of women behind bars. Aboriginal youth are also overrepresented, criminalized and jailed at earlier ages and for longer periods of time than non-Aboriginal young people.

McMasters says it is important that measures other than incarceration be part of the court's repertoire. Often time offences are committed because of addiction. Treatment programs are needed not time in jail, she says.

Hutchinson says one of the advantages Siksika members have over other First Nations people who go to court off-reserve, is that the majority of people involved with the Siksika justice system are First Nations. Probationary officers often know the circumstances that have led to an offender appearing before a judge so a pre-sentencing report is much more detailed.

In February, Siksika Justice Department and Legal Aid Alberta collaborated in bringing Jonathan Rudin, Canada's pre-eminent authority on Gladue report writing and program director of the Aboriginal Legal Services Centre in Toronto, to the First Nation for a workshop. Along with members of the Siksika Justice Department, defence lawyers, Crown prosecutors and a member from the judiciary participated in the workshop. There will be a follow-up conference in Toronto in April.

Languages office aims to halt decline of Inuit language: MLAs say the protection of Inuktitut should be a priority

[Nunatsiaq Online](#)

April 17, 2013

Peter Varga



Nunavut Languages Commissioner Sandra Inuitiq, speaking before the legislative assembly's standing committee on government operations April 17, describes her office's plans and priorities. MLAs questioned the commissioner about efforts to preserve the Inuit language and uphold its status as an official language in the territory. (PHOTO BY PETER VARGA)

The Inuit language may enjoy equal status with English and

French in Nunavut, but the Languages Commissioner of Nunavut, Sandra Inutiq, says its use is declining too rapidly.

The education system is the first place to keep the language alive, Inutiq said, answering questions about her office's work from MLAs sitting on the standing committee on government operations, which dealt with her annual report at [meetings on April 16 and April 17.](#)

"I find in the language acts, there is a gap in early childhood education," Inutiq said, speaking just three months into her appointment as languages commissioner and two weeks after the Nunavut Official Languages Act was put into force. Exposure to English starts at an early age, from daycare services in English to broadcast and electronic media, Inutiq told the MLAs.

Even if children are put in the Inuktitut stream of elementary school education, it's very hard to reverse the move away from the Inuit language to English, she said. "When it comes to protection and revitalization of the Inuit language, that's one area we need to start looking at — what we can do to strengthen early childhood education."

Inutiq gave this as a priority of her office, adding that there "has to be more inclusion of the Inuit language in the media."

The oversight committee, which is made up of regular MLAs, questioned how the commissioner's office would see to it that the "Inuit language" — including Inuktitut and all its various dialects — would be enforced as an official language of the territory, alongside English and French, and in equal priority.

"It is generally believed that the Inuktitut language is in the advanced state of erosion," said John Ningark, MLA for Aqulliq, echoing the concern of committee members.

"I also believe we can reverse that, starting from early childhood education — I think that is a very good goal and objective. How do you propose to do that?"

Inutiq replied that her office has worked with the Department of Education and other agencies to strengthen the language act's coverage of education.

Questions on how the language commissioner will protect and advance the Inuit language persisted throughout the committee hearing, with MLAs asking for more clarity on her four primary roles — identified as ombudsman, advocate, advisor and monitor on language rights.

The office of the commissioner, which is independent of the government but accountable to it, has the power to conduct a systemic revision within territorial government departments and agencies, whenever language rights are not met. [Such an investigation](#), of the Qikiqtani General Hospital in Iqaluit, is now underway.

MLAs suggested that many more of these could be conducted at other government departments. Tagak Curley, the MLA for Rankin Inlet North, highlighted hiring practices for jobs with the territorial government.

"You can be unilingual [English-speaker], and have all the advantages in terms of qualifications in most government positions that are advertised," said Curley. "That's why we have a majority of unilingual individuals working in government." Territorial policy on hiring individuals who speak the Inuit language falls short, he said, so the government cannot be held to account on promoting use of the language within its ranks.

"The office had stated it would do a systemic investigation of human resource practices, and then the office was told this was too heavy-handed," Inutiq replied.

"So we decided to try power of persuasion — to try and work with the departments who are responsible for various human resource practices. It's a balancing act this office faces, in terms of do you take a heavy hand, or do you try and work amicably with other departments."

MLAs also pointed to trouble upholding the use of the Inuit language in the private sector.

"Sometimes the use of the Inuit language among employees in the workplace has gotten them into trouble," Curley said. "That's happened at the mine sites — tremendous conflict."

Inutiq reminded that an exemption process exists to "accommodate" the private sector if it cannot comply with the Official Languages Act, or the Inuit Languages Protection Act, in cases where use of an official language causes too many complications on the job.

MNA sounds alarm after aboriginal youths were detained in Dorval hotel

[Montreal Gazette](#)

April 17, 2013

Katherine Wilton

MONTREAL — Three aboriginal young offenders were detained in a Dorval hotel for a few days recently while a youth protection official from Northern Quebec scrambled to find them a bed in a youth detention centre in Montreal.

Housing young offenders in a hotel, instead of a youth centre where they can get help, is dangerous and unacceptable, said Liberal MNA Robert Poeti, who raised the issue Tuesday in the National Assembly.

The three youths have all been charged with violent crimes, he said. They were not held in a hotel room at the same time, but on three separate occasions for a few days each.

Given the lack of a youth centre close to their community, the youths had to be flown to Val-d'Or and then to Montreal. "It required a guard 24 hours a day and they had to order food from restaurants," said Poeti, the Liberal spokesperson on public security issues.

The Association des Centres Jeunesse du Québec has been sounding the alarm for years about the need for better youth protection services in northern Quebec.

Many aboriginal youths, who are charged with crimes or are placed in custody by youth protection so they can't harm themselves, have to be taken to Montreal to serve their sentences or receive treatment.

Mario Lapointe, director of the Centre de Santé Tulattavik in Kuujjuaq, said housing the three youths in a hotel was an exceptional circumstance, but one that highlights the importance of being able to keep young aboriginals in their communities. At present, there are seven to 10 aboriginal young offenders in youth detention centres in Montreal and Quebec City.

Lapointe said he is committed to "repatriating" aboriginal offenders so they can be rehabilitated in their own communities.

"We need to keep them nearer their reality and their families," he said. "When they go away, they are all alone and there is no one who speaks their language." To fulfill his goal, Lapointe will have to persuade the Quebec government to build a youth detention centre and provide a budget for staff to work with the youths, many of whom have convictions for serious crimes.

Lapointe said he is looking at various options that he will submit to Véronique Hivon, the Quebec minister in charge of youth protection.

The revelations about young offenders being detained in a Dorval hotel became public Tuesday after Poeti was informed of the situation. Two weeks ago, Hivon visited Inuit communities in northern Quebec to discuss social services and youth protection issues with local officials.

Hivon visited a group home for aboriginal youths age 6-12 in Kuujjuaq and a youth centre in Puvirnituq, which she said would give her a better understanding of their reality.

Claire Roy, a spokesperson for Batshaw Youth and Family Centres, the agency that often takes charge of aboriginal young offenders once they arrive in Montreal, said

that all of Quebec's youth centres work together to try to find a bed for youths in need.

If one agency doesn't have a bed, the youth protection agency responsible for the young offender is responsible for making other arrangements until a bed becomes available.

In the cases that Poeti made public, a youth worker found himself in Montreal with a young offender and there was no bed available.

"That was the decision he made," Lapointe said of checking the young offenders into a hotel.

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First Nations ties should be grown from the inside out - Brodie-Brown

[Mining Weekly](#)

April 17, 2013
Simon Rees



TORONTO (miningweekly.com) – Northern Ontario's junior exploration and mining sector is facing challenging times and not just because of the current market turbulence. New amendments to the province's Mining Act introduced on a voluntary basis in November 2012 became mandatory on April 1. The impact has left some companies reeling.

Under the new rules, those wishing to prospect and explore must now submit detailed plans to Ontario's Ministry of Northern Development and Mines before work can start. Companies must also consult with affected landowners, surface-rights holders and, importantly, local First Nations communities.

Processing submissions and issuing permits should take between 30 days and 50 days, although the government reserves the right to extend the timeframe if additional planning or consultation is deemed necessary.

The resultant flurry of permit applications and consultation requests with First Nations bands have left many across the spectrum struggling to fulfil their tasks, the Toronto Star reported on April 12.

Critically, those companies waiting for permits have suddenly found themselves in limbo; they are legally obliged to halt work until approval is given.

"Everything stopped April 1. The drilling company I'm involved with, Cyr Drilling, has 22 drill rigs and the two that were active in northern Ontario had to shut down," Aurcrest's president, CEO and director **Ian Brodie-Brown**, who has extensive industry experience working alongside First Nations partners, told *Mining Weekly Online*.

"I recently met with a company we'd engaged to undertake an airborne geophysics program and had to apologise; I had to explain that we couldn't raise money and progress with the campaign until the permit comes through. I've also applied for 6 000 m of drilling and again, I can't progress until I have a permit," he said. The goal to bolster First Nations' rights by amending the Mining Act was a step in the right direction but one that has been poorly implemented, Brodie-Brown argued. The confusion has also caused misplaced anger. "Many people are confused and angry, and they're often blaming the wrong people – the First Nations."

The onus should have been on fostering closer business co-operation, Brodie-Brown said, adding that the model built up between Cyr Drilling, Aurcrest, and First Nations communities may offer a more suitable and productive alternative to the current situation.

Brodie-Brown's team started exploring northern Ontario's Ring of Fire a few years ago, he explained. "We made a small discovery and wanted to further our presence in the area. We also knew the Mining Act would be amended and that the changes would concern the duty to consult."

"So I went to meet the local native band, the Webequie. During my discussions, I asked what their local unemployment rate was. The reply was staggering: 95%. It's a statistic that I found deeply disturbing and it convinced me to return with five business opportunities," he said.

"The deal was this: the Webequie would have to invest their own money to acquire a key stake in whatever opportunity they liked best. Not only would this give them an interest in the company subsequently formed, but they'd also have a say in its day-to-day running," he continued.

The Webequie opted to help establish a drilling concern, the band initially investing \$196 000 to help secure two drills. Brodie-Brown and his colleagues doubled this amount and, with Cyr Drilling International, established a First Nation subsidiary.

"We were successful. In fact, Cyr soon decided to role-in the native-owned company with the parent company and create a new entity. Because Cyr had more equipment and assets etc., the First Nations' share was reduced to 12%. However, it meant they now had an important stake in a company with 22 rigs," he said.

Brodie-Brown continued to grow his involvement with the First Nations. "**Sam Manitowabi** and **Christopher Angecone** from Lac Seul visited me and requested help in establishing an Ojibwe exploration company," he said.

"My proposal to them was this: I'd take my public company [Aurcrest] and consolidate it at one-for-five, producing a reasonable number of shares that they could buy and secure a respectable stake with. We'd then rebrand the company and start looking for gold in their traditional territory," he said.

Manitowabi and Angecone discussed the deal with their community. The band agreed to invest an initial \$500 000, which helped Aurcrest to then make a notable gold discovery on their lands. Meanwhile, Angecone was subsequently elected to Aurcrest's board of directors. "So we ended up growing the company and its First Nations ties from the inside out," Brodie-Brown said.

"This model of First Nations bands holding an influential stake in a company through their own investment has superb potential and could become increasingly important," he added.

"If you explain the model to the juniors, and show them that there's profit to be made by working closely with the First Nations, they'll start trying to make friends very quickly. Concurrently, First Nations investors will obtain a stake in a company that will hopefully produce jobs, achieve success and appreciate in value," he said. Built-in First Nations ownership could also find support from Bay Street, Toronto, the home of Canada's finance industry, Brodie-Brown said.

"Bay Street will realise that a company with First Nations stakeholders has an inherent stability. It will also note the First Nations have invested their own money and have vested interest in the company's success," he said.

Majors will also appreciate the presence of First Nations stakeholders. "The model enables major mining companies to buy juniors with greater confidence," he added.

"In the future, I believe that majors seeking to acquire a junior will expect and demand the built-in First Nation stakeholder presence. If a major is investing serious money, it will want to know the corporate social responsibility has already been fully integrated," he said.

"And for those companies that say consulting is more than enough, well this won't be sufficient in the future. The majors want security and they'll want to know the First Nations are fully on board and supportive," he said.

"And it's better to get things done right, so as to avoid future problems. The model of First Nation investment, ownership and vested interest is the best, most sensible and, for the First Nations, most equitable way of achieving this," he added.

Edited by: Henry Lazenby

Provinces agree to press for national inquiry into missing aboriginal women

[Globe and Mail](#)

Apr. 17 2013, 10:30 PM EDT

Alexandra Paul



Molly Dixon, right, mother of Angeline Pete, holds up a picture of her missing daughter during a news conference outside the Missing Women Inquiry in Vancouver, B.C. Monday, Oct. 24, 2011. (JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS)

Nine of Canada's provinces pressed Wednesday for a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women across the country.

The action came after a meeting in Winnipeg of aboriginal affairs ministers from every province and territory except British Columbia.

"We jointly call upon the federal government to call a national inquiry into this matter of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls," said Manitoba's Aboriginal Affairs Minister Eric Robinson, chairman of the working group of the provincial and territorial aboriginal affairs.

The ministers included three premiers who hold aboriginal affairs portfolios: New Brunswick's David Alward, Northwest Territories' Bob McLeod and Nunavut's Eva Aariak.

British Columbia, where Liberal Premier Christy Clark's party is fighting for re-election, was not represented at the Winnipeg meeting. Robinson said B.C.'s absence did not weaken the stand Wednesday.

The 2012 B.C. Commission of Inquiry into Missing Women was raised by name as a model of best practices in the minister's joint communique yesterday.

The Assembly of First Nations, the Metis National Council, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Native Women's Association of Canada have made repeated calls for such a national public inquiry into the cases of 600 aboriginal women across the country.

"This is really significant move," Robinson said. "Every province and territory is doing something on its own but as aboriginal ministers and leaders of national aboriginal organizations, we've never gone down this road together where we're collective in our voice," Robinson said.

Up to now the provinces have shied away from an inquiry, agreeing only to consider a task force, which has a narrower scope of inquiry, at a meeting last fall in Saskatchewan.

Ontario Aboriginal Affairs Minister David Zimmer said it was hearing personal stories of so many families who'd suffered the loss of relatives compared to non-aboriginal families that made the difference. And the shift was emotional, he said.

"We get into these meetings and people quote statistics and percentages but when you hear a story like that, it drives it home, viscerally for people. And it was that kind of visceral emotion that impelled the provinces to support this issue," Zimmer said.

Michele Audette, president of the Native Women's Association of Canada, welcomed the call and described it as shift she didn't expect.

"I even cried. My God, politically there is a major step here. The premiers and the ministers across Canada agree with the national (aboriginal) leaders." As chairman, Robinson said he will make the call to Ottawa in a formal letter on the minister's behalf.

Parliament agreed to appoint a Special Committee on the matter of missing and murder aboriginal women, but so far the federal government has resisted demands for a national public inquiry.

In Ottawa on Thursday, Justice Department spokeswoman Julie Di Mambro didn't quite shut the door on it.

But she cited government's agreement to the Parliamentary committee and added the Conservatives have a raft of related anti-crime initiatives that encompass the concerns of missing and murdered aboriginal women.

"Our government has taken concrete action to address the tragic issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women," Di Mambro said.

"We have made significant investments to give new tools to law enforcement and to improve the justice system. This includes creating a new National Centre for Missing Persons, improving law enforcement databases and developing community safety plans specifically designed for aboriginal communities."

Conference to help male sexual abuse survivors: Sudbury conference appeals to First Nations men, but is open to all male sex abuse survivors

[CBC News](#)

Apr 18, 2013 4:03 PM ET



(Hilary Duff/CBC)

A conference taking place in Sudbury on Friday is finding ways for male survivors of sexual abuse to incorporate traditional Aboriginal values into their healing process.

The "Healing the Fire Within" conference is being organized by the Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre. The executive director of the organization said the sexual abuse of Aboriginal men has roots in a traumatic piece of history.

"With the residential school came a number of intergenerational affects of trauma," Angela Recollet said.

"This is where it stems from. So, in current day, we still have to address and deal with some of the things that came out of those schools and the treatment of our children."

Recollet said this is the second year for the conference and more than 50 men have already pre-registered

She also said the day's events are open to all male survivors of sexual abuse, not just those of First Nations background.

Ottawa not doing enough to deal with aboriginal poverty, substance abuse: Ontario minister David Zimmer
Ontario's aboriginal affairs minister is urging the federal government to do more to address staggering poverty and despair on native reserves

[Toronto Star](#)

April 18, 2013

Richard J. Brennan



FRED CHARTRAND / THE CANADIAN PRESS file photo

Ontario Aboriginal Affairs Minister David Zimmer said Thursday that federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt, above, didn't show up for a two-day meeting of provincial and territorial aboriginal affairs ministers and native leaders in Winnipeg recently.

Ottawa is not doing nearly enough to deal with the staggering poverty and substance abuse on native reserves, Ontario Aboriginal Affairs Minister David Zimmer says.

His comment follows a declaration of emergency in Neskantaga First Nation in the wake of two recent suicides, making a total of seven deaths and 20 suicide attempts in the past year in the community of only 300.

Zimmer said Thursday the federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt didn't even bother to show up for a two-day meeting of provincial and territorial aboriginal affairs ministers and native leaders in Winnipeg recently.

"It should just be in our hearts and our souls to tackle this and we need the federal government to work with us," Zimmer said as the province prepared its emergency response plan.

"We have to tackle this issue of suicides on the reserves and indeed the [off-reserves](#)," Zimmer told reporters at Queen's Park. "We've got to push with the federal government to do their bit."

While native reserves are the responsibility of the federal government, Emergency Management Ontario is on standby to work with Ottawa and the First Nations community to co-ordinate support during this situation.

Neskantaga Chief Peter Moonias said that just as the community was burying the first victim — a man in his 30s — they learned of the death of a 19-year-old from Neskantaga living in Thunder Bay. He added that police have yet to declare the second death a suicide, but suspects they soon will.

The problems come just a few months after another young man took his life there in December, a tragedy that prompted the community to close ranks and put its youth on suicide watch to prevent additional deaths.

The Ojibwa chief estimates more than half the community's adults are addicted to OxyContin or other painkillers. Recently, he has seen evidence of trafficking in Tylenol 2 selling for \$5 a pill.

The limited health-care resources made available to Neskantaga to deal with addictions have been insufficient and have not worked well, Moonias added.

"Let's help these young people," he said. "I don't want this to continue another day, another month."

Another First Nations leader in the region told CBC that meeting the demands of the burgeoning [mining industry](#) is only adding to Neskantaga's misery.

"It's just a lot of pressure, I think, from the outside," Nishnawbe Aski Nation Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler said, "as well as trying to deal with what's happening right in their community."

Zimmer said it is in everyone's best interests, including the mining interest, the federal and provincial governments not only to tackle the emergency but also tackles long-term causes of utter despair in this community near James Bay.

"It is in everybody's interest, it's in the governments' interest, it's in the aboriginal community's interest and also in the interest of the mining companies to have the best possible workplace conditions and community conditions up there," he said.

Jobs are one thing, Zimmer said, but without quality health care and education one won't lead to the other.

"The question is to get the mix right, jobs, health, education," Zimmer said.

Neskantaga First Nation is in NDP MPP Sarah Campbell's Kenora—Rainy River riding.

"There is a lot that's within the provincial government's control . . . we need to help them with the treatment programs in the communities. We need to help provide some funding for education and to help put adequate schools in. There is a whole bunch of things that need to happen," Campbell said.

"It's a crisis and we need to respond to it in the same way we would respond to a crisis in other areas of the province . . . but we also need to address the larger social issues in (native) communities right across this province," she said.

With files from The Canadian Press

Financial Transparency Legislation Renews Controversy Over Chiefs' Salaries

[Indian Country Today](#)

April 18, 2013



David P. Ball

Newly enacted federal legislation forcing First Nations to disclose their leaders' salaries and spending online has been decried by critics who say the public is being misled by "myth" and stereotypes.

On Wednesday March 27 in Winnipeg, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern

Development Minister Bernard Valcourt attempted to announce that the First Nations Financial Accountability Act, known as Bill C-27, had received royal assent and become law. But advocates say that accountability already exists, and the Conservatives' real purpose is to demonize Natives as corrupt and incapable of managing themselves.

Demonstrators cut short Valcourt's press conference, one of them drowning out a speech by aboriginal advocate Phyllis Sutherland by beating a hand drum while shouting "Oppressors!" as she and the minister were ushered into a back room. Sutherland, an outspoken critic of her Manitoba band's leadership—her chief reportedly earned \$206,381 in 2009—brought the salaries of some First Nation chiefs to national media attention three years ago when she leaked the information to the right-leaning Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF). The federation launched an ardent campaign for transparency legislation by releasing data suggesting that dozens of chiefs earned more than the country's Prime Minister and provincial premiers. Highest paid was the chief of Glooscap First Nation in Nova Scotia, population 304, who reportedly earned \$978,468.

But aboriginal critics tore apart the federation's method of comparing First Nations and Canadian politicians' salaries. The organization included travel reimbursements for Natives but not Members of Parliament, for instance, and also inflated aboriginal incomes—which, under treaties, are not taxed on reserves—in order to compare them with Canadian politicians' taxed salaries, a tactic that nearly doubled the leaders' salaries in some cases.

"As far as I'm concerned, people have a right to know what their chief and councils are making and what their band finances are being spent on," Sutherland, of Peguis First Nation in Manitoba, told Indian Country Today Media Network. "Where is all this money? Why didn't they do anything for the people? There's certainly no benefit to the people out there."

Sutherland said her goal was to end alleged mismanagement and secrecy, especially as many Natives suffer from substandard housing and education.

"In every First Nations reserve I talk with, it's always the same story: widespread corruption among leaders," she said. "Not all of them. There are some First Nations doing wonderful things for their people. But I can't see the problem with them having to post their salaries, honorariums and remuneration. It should be automatic."

Pam Palmater, chair of Ryerson University's Indigenous Governance program and runner-up in last year's election for National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), says information on band finances already is provided to Aboriginal Affairs. Reserves must fill out 163 spending reports a year, she said, quoting AFN reports. On average, she added, chiefs actually make about \$36,000—less than 80 percent of average per capita earnings in Canada.

"The financial information already is transparent," Palmater told reporters. "That's the myth that's being perpetuated by this legislation. First Nations don't get a single

cent unless they submit audited financial statements. More than audited financial statements: On average they have to submit one report every three days.”

The AFN also opposed the legislation, saying that there are other ways to improve accountability on reserves without extending federal control over bands.

“First Nations have been clear in their commitment to accountability and transparency to all of our citizens,” said AFN National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo. “Bill C-27 would not support this accountability, but instead gives more power to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. We do not support unilateralism that further entrenches us in a system that doesn’t work for our people or Canada. The answers lie in our communities and with our citizens, not with more control from Ottawa.”

Valcourt told reporters on March 27 that C-27 represents “an important step” toward First Nations’ self-sufficiency, and would help assure outside investors their money is well managed.

“In our quest for self-sufficiency and economic development, we have a whole youth there that is waiting [for] training and getting the skills they need to get the jobs that are available and can be available for them,” he said. “Investors need the assurance there is accountability and transparency. That’s why I believe this is an important step for First Nations all across Canada.”